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Gandhi talks non-alignment while seeking U.S. weapons

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Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi told a joint meeting of Congress yesterday that "India and the United States are not allies in security strategies," while elsewhere in Washington officials were negotiating a sale of advanced military technology to India.

Mr. Gandhi also called for nuclear disarmament yesterday and in what appeared to be a reference to the Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative, mentioned "our deep reservation about the militarization of outer space."

Mr. Gandhi was cordially received in the Capitol and underlined the theme that the two democracies "are friends in larger human causes — freedom, justice and peace."

Mr. Gandhi, 40, elaborated on India's leadership role in the non-aligned movement of nations which met recently in New Delhi. His Italian-born wife Sonia watched from the packed visitors gallery of the House chamber.

"We are opposed to the polarization of the world into rival military blocs. Non-alignment is the extension of the idea of democracy to international relations," he said.

India is "apprehensive" about the establishment of military bases around the world and cited the "militarization of the Indian Ocean" as a development that directly affects his nation, he said.

India, a non-aligned democracy of 750 million people, is courting both the United States and the Soviet Union where Mr. Gandhi completed a state visit and a \$1.15 billion industrial credit agreement two weeks ago.

The United States has agreed in principle to sell military hardware to India which recently expressed an interest in surveillance and fighter aircraft, air defense and anti-submarine warfare items.

The agreement hinges on provisions in India to assure that there will be no leaks of military technology to the Soviet Union which now provides the bulk of India's defense goods.

Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gandhi have discussed the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan which is an issue that complicates relations between the United States and India.

The United States is the prime arms supplier to Pakistan so that country can defend itself against the Soviet presence in neighboring Afghanistan. India, which has been buying Soviet defense materiel for 20 years, says it accepts the Soviet view that Soviet troops were invited into Afghanistan and are not an invasion force.

However, Pakistan, which is a supply conduit for much of the Afghan resistance, is a foe of India's which believes those U.S. arms could be used against them. India and Pakistan have fought three times since 1947.

"We stand for a political settlement in Afghanistan that ensures sovereignty, integrity, independence and non-aligned status, and enables the refugees to return to their homes in safety and honor," Mr. Gandhi said.

In an apparent reference to the U.S. sale of F-16 jet fighters and other weapons to Pakistan, Mr. Gandhi said India is "directly affected" by the flow of "increasingly sophisticated arms into our neighborhood."

As is the custom when both houses of Congress gather to hear a foreign head of state, the Indian leader spoke in English. He addressed the House chamber from the same rostrum where President Reagan delivers his annual State of the Union speech.

Mr. Gandhi's grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India following its independence in 1947, addressed a similar joint session 36 years ago. Mr. Gandhi succeeded his mother Indira as prime minister after she was assassinated Oct. 31.

Earlier in his speech, Mr. Gandhi drew laughter and applause when he traced common threads of history between the two nations from the late 1700s when both were British colonies.

"We wish that Elihu Yale had founded a university for us instead of being governor of Madras and that Lord Cornwallis had surrendered in Delhi rather than to General Washington," Mr. Gandhi said in his understated fashion.

"It was Indian tea that stimulated your independence movement," he added immediately, triggering more mirth from the chamber that

included members of the diplomatic corps and President Reagan's Cabinet, besides the members of Congress.

He also cited the late Mahatma Gandhi, a leader of the Indian independence movement whose "idea of non-violence as a positive moral force was later to travel beyond our borders to influence Martin Luther King in your country's civil rights movement."

At another point, Mr. Gandhi left his prepared text and spoke with ease about India's "mixed economy," where he said that the private sector would always be larger than the public sector or those areas which are a combination of both.

Again highlighting the themes of non-alignment, Mr. Gandhi said it is part of the effort to restore "confidence in international economic cooperation..."

That cooperation, he said, is important to India's development.

"We have to modernize much of our existing industry, increase productivity and make it internationally competitive," he said.

"I dream of an India — strong, independent, self-reliant and in the front rank of the nations of the world in the service of mankind," he said near the close of his address.

"Concessional assistance is drying up at a time when it is needed most. Trade barriers are going up. The livelihood of millions in the developing countries is in jeopardy," Mr. Gandhi said in an apparent call for more U.S. participation in multilateral economic development assistance for Third World countries.

"U.S. economic assistance was of great help to us especially in the 1960s," he said.

In private, Indian officials this week said the United States had proven to be an unreliable supplier of industrial and military materials, often threatening to cut off spare parts when it feels that India takes an anti-U.S. stand on international issues.

After his meeting with President Reagan on Wednesday, Mr. Gandhi said India will maintain its policy of non-alignment and does not believe friendship with the United States "must be at the cost" of ties with the Soviet Union.